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FM AMEMBASSY GABORONE
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 6251
INFO RUCNSAD/SOUTHERN AF DEVELOPMENT COMMUNITY COLLECTIVE

UNCLAS GABORONE 000071

SIPDIS

FOR OES/S N. CARTER-FOSTER

E.O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: [ECON](#) [ASEC](#) [SOCI](#) [BC](#)

SUBJECT: TEXTING WHILE DRIVING ALREADY ILLEGAL IN BOTSWANA

REF: STATE 6703

¶1. Ambassador Nolan delivered reftel demarche on distracted driving to Daphne Kadiwa, Botswana's Chief of Protocol and a senior aide to President Khama. Kadiwa responded that under Botswana's Road Traffic Act, it is prohibited for drivers to text or otherwise use mobile phones and other interactive communication devices while driving. The Act was amended in 2008 to dramatically increase fines on most traffic offenses, in an effort to encourage better driving standards, better driving ability, and road courtesy.

¶2. Botswana's Road Traffic (Use of Mobile Phones) Regulations, 2005 state that "No person shall, while driving a motor vehicle on a road, use (a) a hand-held mobile phone; (b) a two-way radio; or (c) a hand-held interactive communication device, unless he or she uses a hands-free kit." The regulation's definition of an "interactive communication device" is broad and includes any device used for "providing access to the internet, sending or receiving oral or written messages, facsimile documents, or still or moving images." Drivers who break the law by phoning or texting while driving may be fined, have their mobile devices seized by the police, or even face imprisonment. Police regularly and systematically enforce this regulation, often at busy intersections in the major cities while on traffic patrol duties. In practice, police generally impose spot fines or seize phones from offending drivers. Post is not aware of any cases in which imprisonment occurred for this offense.

¶3. Post has not yet obtained any data about fatalities which may have been caused by distracted driving or regarding awareness/education campaigns, but will follow up septel if additional information becomes available.

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